

USDA Farm Bill
Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns

Room 116-A
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building

1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20250-3355

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Dear Secretary Johanns: Here are my responses to most of the advertised questions.

"How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness and our country's ability to compete effectively in global markets?"

Farm policy should not encourage ag commodity producers to compete in global markets. It's sufficient to satisfy the domestic market. Eliminate the subsidy systems and require other nations, through the WTO, to eliminate their subsidy systems. Trade restrictions, such as an embargo on foreign subsidized ag commodities or a tariff equal in amount to the subsidies, could be imposed on imports that seek to unfairly compete with domestic production. The land, water, and other resources that will be freed from production agriculture for the export market could then be devoted to restoring this nation's wildlife.

"How should farm policy be designed to effectively and fairly distribute assistance to producers?"

Ag subsidy systems are out of control; subsidies in all forms, including "assistance" should be eliminated. Ag producers overproduce numerous commodities. The commodities that are most heavily subsidized are the most over-produced, especially beef. Eliminate the subsidies and let production diminish to what the market will bear.

"How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals?"

The best way to achieve conservation is to have a lot less agriculture. The simple way to do that is to eliminate the vast subsidy systems that pay farmers and ranchers to farm and ranch on unproductive land or in inappropriate places and climates, to raise the wrong crops using wrong farming practices in order to collect subsidized crop insurance, to ranch vast stretches of public land to produce unneeded cattle and sheep at public expense and at great cost to wildlife, to ranch designated wilderness areas, to farm and ranch national wildlife refuges, to farm and ranch in areas that require ag producers to monopolize the lion's share of available water in the western U.S. (aided by more subsidies from the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers) causing widespread water pollution and dewatering of streams and rivers, to farm and ranch to produce commodities that are already oversupplied in the market, or to not farm or ranch at all (or to pretend that they're not) under the guise of conserving "open space" or "wildlife habitat" in the easily abused CRP subsidy and other types of recently enacted "conservation" subsidy programs like the Wetlands Reserve and Grasslands Reserve subsidy programs. Billions of dollars a year are wasted on unnecessary agriculture doing great harm to the nation's wildlife.

"How can federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?"

Rural areas might prosper by the elimination of unproductive agriculture that's been propped up by subsidies. Agriculture monopolizes resources (water, land, and increasingly the public treasury - state, county, and municipal subsidies in addition to federal subsidies) while producing very little (at least that's the case in western rural areas; exception: irrigated areas produce more, but at even greater expense due to the need for a vast irrigation infrastructure requiring more subsidies and causing more environmental damage). Agriculture supplies only a few low-paying jobs

while it degrades the environment, which hurts other industries and discourages and injures other rural residents, who greatly outnumber farmers and ranchers in rural areas.

Rural areas would be better served if farmers and ranchers were forced to obey the same laws that the rest of us do, such as laws that forbid various types of pollution. For instance, ag producers are routinely allowed to pollute the air with smoke, pesticides, and herbicides under state "right-to-farm" laws. These laws harm the environment and negatively impact non-farm residents, the majority of us. Federal farm programs could attempt to override destructive state laws that unfairly favor ag producers to the detriment of everyone else. Free permits to pollute add very little to the production of already overproduced commodities; it would not be missed. Free permits to pollute are mostly a convenience to a politically powerful minority.

"How should agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues be addressed in the next farm bill?"

It shouldn't. The federal government has no need to involve itself in such matters and could save money by getting out of the ag business.

Food sells itself. Let consumers decide which products are worth buying and thus producing.

Sincerely,

Larry D Bullock

FROM



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